25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 API Burma
Karen AP7

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336. KARENS SOWING THEIR CROPS.

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The primitive Karéns in the remote hills build one or more huge bamboo barracks, partitioned off for the different families. Those more in contact with civilization build separate huts. When the new settlement is complete, the Karéns, both men and women, carouse. From February to April each household is hard at work clearing its cultivation-plot of four to eight acres of forest on the hill-side. Bamboo forest is preferred; occasional trees of large size are killed by ringing, or are lopped to get rid of their shade; many trees are felled (No. 105). The lumber is left to dry for burning, till the rain clouds begin to gather. Sometimes an unexpected break of the monsoon prevents the burning and renders the whole labour futile. After the first burn, the residue is stacked against the standing trees and burned again. When the rains have set in, the seed is sown. A man goes in advance and makes rows of shallow holes with a hoe mounted on a long and tapering bamboo staff; the free or wide end is furnished with openings in the side, which cause the bamboo to emit a musical note at each stroke. Women with seed-bags follow; they put in the rice and the secondary crops (*hnan*, cotton, and, in a few localities, teak-seed for the government, No. 244), in alternate rows, and close the soil. Watchers' huts are built, and the birds scared till the seed has sprouted. From that time till the crop is thick, it has to be assiduously weeded. If the cultivator falls sick for a fortnight the weeds gain ground, and he cannot come up with the work again. The clearings have to be fenced to protect them against deer and pigs, and the rats have to be kept down by lines of traps which often extend for miles. In years of bamboo seeding (p. 112) the rats multiply to

337. KAREN CROP-WATCHER'S HUT.